162967 - Expression Said When Leg Becomes Numb

the question

It was narrated from Ibn 'Umar in al-Adab al-Mufrad that if his foot became numb, he would mention the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). Is this action something that is prescribed in Islam?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The isnad (chain of narrators) of this report hinges on Abu Ishaq as-Sabee'i, and it was narrated from him by five of his companions, namely Sufyan ath-Thawri, Zuhayr ibn Mu'awiyah, Shu'bah, Israil ibn Yoonus and Abu Bakr ibn 'Ayyash. But they differed concerning the narration of the report from Abu Ishaq, and there are several versions

1.

It was narrated from Sufyan ath-Thawri and Zuhayr ibn Mu'awiyah, from Abu Ishaq, from 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Sa'd who said: Ibn 'Umar's leg became numb and a man said to him: Mention the dearest of people to you. He said: Muhammad.

Narrated by al-Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad; ad-Daaraqutni in al-'Ilal, from Sufyan ath-Thawri with the wording mentioned above, but in the version narrated by ad-Daraqutni it says "O Muhammad."

It was narrated by 'Ali ibn al-Ja'd in al-Musnad; Ibraaheem al-Harbi in Ghareeb al-Hadeeth; Ibn Sa'd in at-Tabaqat; Ibn 'Asakir in Tareekh Dimashq, from Zuhayr, with the wording: I came to Ibn 'Umar and his leg had become numb, so I said: What is the matter with your leg? He said: Its nerves are

contracting. I said: Call upon the dearest of people to you. He said: O Muhammad, and he was able to stretch it out.

This isnad cannot be proven to be sound because of ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn Sa‘d al-Qurashi al-‘Adawi al-Kufi, the freed slave of ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him). In al-‘Ilal by ad-Daraqutni, it says that he was the freed slave of Ibn al-Khattab. His biography is in al-Jarh wa’t-Ta‘deel and Tahdheeb al-Kamal. We did not find anyone who evaluated the narrator; rather it was said to Yahya ibn Ma‘een (may Allah have mercy on him): Who is ‘Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Sa‘d? He said: I do not know.

Tareekh Ibn Ma‘een -- Riwayat ad-Doori.

With regard to the view of al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar in at-Tahdheeb, I say: An-Nasai said: (He is) thiqah (trustworthy).

Dr. Sa‘d al-Humayd (may Allah preserve him) commented on him by saying:

I think that this (that he is thiqah or trustworthy) is probably what an-Nasai said about the previous narrator, namely ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn Sa‘d al-Madani al-A‘raj. There is a similarity between them (in name), hence al-Mazzi said in Tahdheeb al-Kamal that an-Nasai stated that al-Madani al-A‘raj was trustworthy, but he did not mention his saying that al-Kufi, the freed slave of Ibn ‘Umar, was such.

End quote.

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Note: ad-Daraqutni stated in al-‘Ilal that Zuhayr ibn Mu‘awiyah narrated it from Abu Ishaq, from ‘Abd al-Jabbar ibn Sa‘eed, from Ibn ‘Umar, but I have not found the origin of this report.

2.

It was narrated by Shu‘bah, from Abu Ishaq, from someone who heard Ibn ‘Umar say: My leg became numb, and it was said: Mention the most beloved of people. He said: O Muhammad.

Narrated by Ibrahim al-Harbi in Ghareeb al-Hadeeth.

There is some weakness in its isnad because of the unknown character of the narrator from Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him).

3.

It was narrated by Israel, from Abu Ishaq, from al-Haytham ibn Hanash, who said: We were with ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) and his leg became numb. A man said to him: Mention the dearest of people to you. He said: O Muhammad. Then he stood up and it was as if he was released from a hobble.

This was narrated by Ibn as-Sunni in ‘Aml al-Yawm wa’l-Layla.

This isnad is also da‘eef (weak) because of al-Haytham ibn Hanash, whose biography appears in at-Tareekh al-Kabeerand al-Jarh wa’t-Ta‘deel. None of the scholars said he was trustworthy; no one said he was good or bad. His state is unknown and al-Khateeb al-Baghdadi gave his name in al-Kifayah as an example of those who are unknown.

Moreover in the isnad going back to Israel there is a narrator whose name is Muhammad ibn Mus‘ab al-Qarqasani, who was classed as da‘eef by Ibn Ma‘een and an-Nasa’i. Ibn Hibban said: His memory became poor; he used to mix up isnads and attribute mursal (hadeeth in which the narrator between thesuccessorand the Prophet is omitted from a givenisnad)reports to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). It is not permissible to quote his reports as evidence, although others regarded him as trustworthy.

Note: ad-Daraqutni stated in al-‘Ilalthat Israel narrated it from Abu Ishaq, from Ibn ‘Umar, in a

mursal report, but I could not find this report.

4.

It was narrated by Abu Bakr ibn ‘Ayyash: Abu Ishaq al-Sabee‘i told us, from Abu Shu‘bah who said: I was walking with Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) and his leg became numb. He sat down and a man said to him: Mention the dearest of people to you. He said: O Muhammad, then he got up and walked.

Also narrated by Ibn as-Sunni in ‘Aml al-Yawm wa’l-Laylah.

This is also a da‘eef isnaad, as it is not known who this Abu Shu‘bah is, and there are some reservations about Abu Bakr ibn ‘Ayyash.

To sum up, these isnads (chains) are not free of three issues:

i.

Each of them includes an unknown narrator at the level of those from whom Abu Ishaq as-Sabee‘i narrated it. They are: ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn Sa‘d, al-Haytham ibn Hanash and Abu Shu‘bah. And there is a fourth narrator whose name is not known.

ii.

Moreover it is not proven in the books that Abu Ishaq as-Sabee‘i heard from each of these four. It is known that Abu Ishaq was well-known for tadlees (ambiguity or giving the wrong impression), to such an extent that al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar mentioned him in the third level of mudalliseen (those who were known for tadlees), in his book Ta‘reef Ahl al-Taqdees bi Maratib al-Mawsoofoona bi’t-Tadlees. So there is the fear that he used it in some of these reports too. He narrated the hadeeth saying ‘an (from) in the isnad, and did not state clearly that he heard it. Although the basic principle is that the hadeeth of Abu Ishaq in which it says ‘an in the isnad is acceptable, using it

here in conjunction with these unknown shaykhs gives rise to suspicion and doubt.

iii.

The fact that those who narrated from Abu Ishaq as-Sabee‘i differed may cause us to doubt its soundness because of this lack of harmony, especially since Abu Ishaq’s memory changed and he started to forget towards the end of his life. Even though it is possible to regard the report of Sufyan ath-Thawri as more likely to be correct, because he had the best memory of those who narrated from Abu Ishaq, this thinking is nevertheless speculative and may not be correct. Dr. Sa‘d al-Humayd (may Allah preserve him) says: The most sound of these isnads is the report of Sufyan ath-Thawri. End quote.

Shaykh Abu Ishaq al-Huwayni (may Allah preserve him) says: The report of ath-Thawri is the most reliable. End quote from al-Fatawa al-Hadeethiyyah.

Shaykh Salih Al ash-Shaykh says: Sufyan is one of the best in terms of memory and his narrating the report of Abu Ishaq with this wording proves that this is the correct version and that others are wrong and are to be rejected. End quote from Hadhihi Mafaaheemuna.

The report of Ibn ‘Umar cannot be strengthened by what Ibn as-Sunni narrated in ‘Aml al-Yawm wa’l-Laylah, where he said: Ja‘far ibn ‘Eesa Abu Ahmad told us, Ahmad ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Rawh told us, Salam ibn Sulayman told us, Ghiyath ibn Ibrahim told us, from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Uthman ibn Khuthaym, from Mujahid, that Ibn ‘Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: A man’s leg became numb in the presence of Ibn ‘Abbas, and Ibn ‘Abbas said: Mention the dearest of people to you. He said: Muhammad, blessings and peace of Allah be upon him. And the numbness went away.

That is because this is a very weak report because of Ghiyath ibn Ibrahim, of whom Ahmad ibn Hanbal said: People rejected his hadeeth. Al-Bukhari said: They rejected him. See: Mizan al-I‘tidal.

Its isnad also includes other weak narrators.

The report was classed as da‘eef (weak) by Shaykh al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) in Da‘eef al-Adab al-Mufrad; and by Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd (may Allah have mercy on him) when he said: There is no sound report about dhikr (remembrance of Allah) or du‘a (supplication) when one’s leg goes numb; no marfoo‘ hadeeth (narration attributed to Prophet) has been narrated concerning that.

End quote from Tasheeh ad-Du‘a. 362

Secondly:

The fact that the dearest of people to Ibn ‘Umar, namely our Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), was mentioned – even if we assume the report is sound – does not mean that it was done by way of calling upon him for help. Rather it was merely mentioning him. There is a huge difference between the two matters.

Merely mentioning him is what was meant by some of the scholars who regarded this report as sound in their books, such as Imam an-Nawawi in al-Adhkar, Ibn Taymiyah in al-Kalim at-Tayyib and others. This way of treating numbness was used by the Arabs in the past; they thought that mentioning the beloved could make the blood flow in the veins and help get rid of the numbness. There are dozens of examples of this in Arabic poetry, which indicates that this was a kind of remedy used by the Arabs. For more information please refer to the book Buloogh al-Arab fi Ma‘rifat Ahwal al-‘Arab by al-Aloosi.

As for calling upon him for help, that would mean that Ibn ‘Umar was asking for immediate healing of the numbness in his leg from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and not from Allah, may He be exalted. It is not permissible to seek healing from anyone except Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, for He is the One in Whose hand is the power to cause harm or bring

benefit; He is the Lord Who controls the entire universe. He, may He be glorified and exalted, has commanded us to ask of Him and not of any of His creation with regard to that which only Allah is able to do. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And the mosques are for Allah (Alone), so invoke not anyone along with Allah.

(It has been revealed to me that) When the slave of Allah (Muhammad) stood up invoking (his Lord Allah) in prayer to Him they (the jinns) just made round him a dense crowd as if sticking one over the other (in order to listen to the Prophet’s recitation).

Say (O Muhammad): I invoke only my Lord (Allah Alone), and I associate none as partners along with Him.

Say: It is not in my power to cause you harm, or to bring you to the Right Path” [72:18-21].

Shaykh Abu Bateen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If this report is saheeh (authentic), perhaps Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has caused mentioning the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in this situation to have a special effect. And Allah knows best. He did not say, “O Muhammad, take away my numbness”, or, “I complain to you about the numbness in my leg” – as some people (incorrectly) think that this report constitutes evidence that it is permissible to call upon the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and to seek help from him and ask him to fulfil their deeds and relieve distress.

End quote from Rasail wa Fatawa Aba Bateen.

Whoever wants to use this report as evidence that it is permissible to seek help from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) has gone too far and is claiming something for which there is no proof in the report; he has ignored all the rules and guidelines on understanding reports and reaching conclusions. Think about what the man said; he said “Mention” and did not

say “Seek help from” or “Call upon”, except in the report of Zuhayr ibn Mu‘awiyah from Abu Ishaq, where it says “Call upon the dearest of people to you.” But there can be no doubt that the report of Sufyan ath-Thawri is more appropriate and more authentic, because he had a better memory and narrated more soundly from Abu Ishaq as-Sabee‘i. Moreover, Zuhayr ibn Mu‘awiyah heard from Abu Ishaq after his memory changed because of old age, and there is the fear that this report is one of those that come under that category.

Thirdly:

Even if we assume that it is true that Ibn ‘Umar said “O Muhammad” – although these words are not to be found in the report of Sufyan ath-Thawri – that does not necessarily mean that he was seeking help from him. It may be understood as meaning that he was calling to mind the person of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) so as to send blessings upon him. In that case what it means is: O Muhammad, may Allah send blessings upon you. This is how it was understood by Ibn Hajar al-Haytami in ad-Durr al-Mandood.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The words “O Muhammad, O Prophet of Allah” and similar calls are meant to bring to mind the person called, so that one might address the person brought to mind. This is like when the worshipper says in the prayer: “As-salaam ‘alayka ayyuha’n-Nabiyyu wa rahmat-Allahi wa barakaatuhu (Peace be upon you, O Prophet, and the mercy of Allah and His Blessings).” People do that a great deal; a man may address the person he is thinking of even though there is no one in front of him to hear what he says.

End quote from Iqtida’ as-Sirat al-Mustaqeem li Mukhalafat Ashab al-Jaheem.

Fourthly:

The words “Mention the dearest of people to you” would not necessarily elicit the same response

from everyone whose leg becomes numb. One person may mention the name of his wife, another may mention the name of his father and a third may mention the name of his friend. Moreover, the person mentioned may not be one of the righteous or one of the pious worshippers; rather he may be an evildoer who does not adhere to the rulings of Islam. So how can it be said that calling upon him for help or even mentioning his name may be a direct cause of the numbness going away?

To sum up: there is no saheeh report concerning this matter.

And Allah knows best.